

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'Cuba's experience at disposal of people of Equatorial Guinea'
—PAGES 6-7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 69/NO. 47 DECEMBER 5, 2005

After winning contract, meat packers in Canada fight for stronger union

BY JOHN STEELE

BROOKS, Alberta—"Lakeside saw they were losing and signed," Joseph Chan said November 12. Chan, a meat cutter, was speaking to *Militant* reporters who visited this area a week after workers at Lakeside Packers, Canada's largest beef slaughterhouse, approved a contract with the food giant Tyson, which owns the plant. Chan and other members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 401 were fresh from their victory in a 23-day strike that ended November 4.

Workers were eager to talk about the significance of what they accomplished and the next steps in consolidating the union inside the plant. Several pointed out this was the first union contract they have forced the company to sign since the UFCW was decertified after a strike workers lost in the 1980s.

Some 56 percent of the 1,600 workers who voted approved the contract.

The strikers faced Alberta government interference on the side of the

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Striking mechanics rally in Minnesota; Northwest Airlines imposes wage cuts on entire workforce

BY NELSON GONZALEZ

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—More than 600 mechanics and their supporters rallied here at Bloomington-Jefferson High School November 19 to respond to Northwest management's latest moves to drive all the unions off its property. The Northwest Strike Solidarity Committee organized the event.

Three days earlier, a New York City bankruptcy judge ratified "interim agreements" that cut the pay of the company's pilots by nearly 24 percent and of flight attendants by 21 percent. Both unions had earlier agreed to these cuts. The judge also agreed to a demand by the bosses that Northwest impose a 19 percent wage cut on 14,420 ground workers organized by the International Association of Machinists (IAM). The IAM had not agreed to this demand. These cuts represent 60 percent of the \$1.4 billion the company claims it needs to reemerge from bankruptcy as a profitable airline.

Northwest has made it clear if it doesn't get what it wants through voluntary agreements with the unions it will go back to the court to get its blessing for imposing further cuts.

In a related development, North-

Continued on page 4

Democrats, Republicans outdo each other in backing Iraq war

Factionalism rife among capitalist politicians

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

On November 15 the U.S. Senate unanimously adopted a nearly half-trillion-dollar military spending bill.

Three days later, in a 403-3 vote, the House of Representatives rejected a motion for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Three Democrats approved the resolution, while 187 voted with the Republicans.

These votes underscored the commitment of both the Democratic and Republican parties to the imperialist war in Iraq.

With no alternative offered by the Democratic leadership to the Bush administration's course in Iraq and beyond, Congress and the White House are becoming more rife with factionalism.

The big-business media itself has contributed to the shrill tone of the debate, both in editorials as well as partisan "news" articles that paint a false picture of "heightened opposition to the war in Iraq" by Democratic politicians.

In a 98-0 vote on November 15, the Senate passed legislation authorizing \$492 billion in military spending. Democrats and Republicans in the



Reuters/Neil Sevelius

U.S. Marines fire on antigovernment forces in Qusayba, western Iraq, near the border with Syria, November 8 during Operation Steel Curtain.

House and Senate are now working on a final version of the bill to send to President George Bush, which will include a further \$50 billion for the U.S.-led occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Senate rejected a Democratic-sponsored amendment demanding a

timetable for a U.S. troop pullout. Instead, it passed a nonbinding resolution calling on the White House to report quarterly on progress toward troop withdrawal.

"We're asking the administration to

Continued on page 3

Venezuela: Tens of thousands march to protest U.S. aggression, back gov't in dispute with Mexico

BY LUIS MADRID

CARACAS, Venezuela—At the Summit of the Americas held November 4-5 in Argentina, the government of Venezuela rejected Washington's attempts "to swallow us through an age-old scheme," said President Hugo Chávez, addressing a rally of tens of

Welcome! 3,200 new 'Militant' subscribers

BY PAUL PEDERSON

"We welcome the more than 3,200 new *Militant* readers who have subscribed over the past nine weeks," said Jacob Perasso, an organizer of the just-concluded subscription drive.

The campaign, which began with an international goal of 1,500, quickly blew past that mark. Based on the response, the *Militant* doubled the target—and the final total went even higher.

"The success reflects a discussion that's taking place among hundreds of thousands of workers, farmers, and youth who are looking for an alternative to the course of the war

Continued on page 4

thousands here November 19. He was referring to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). At the Argentina meeting, Washington pushed the FTAA, which would promote foreign investment and imperialist exploitation.

Chávez's speech capped a day that had started with a festive march—including mariachi music—that began in the eastern part of town and wound its way to Miraflores, the presidential palace, in central Caracas. The mobilization was called to oppose U.S. imperialist intervention and to support the Chávez administration in a dispute with the government of Mexico.

Diplomatic relations between Mexico and Venezuela were downgraded November 14 when both governments withdrew their ambassadors. A day earlier Mexico's president, Vicente Fox, threatened to expel Venezuela's envoy within a day if Chávez didn't apologize for remarks he had just made in his weekly radio and TV program. Chávez called the government of Mexico a "puppy of the empire" for its vigorous support for the FTAA at the Argentina summit.

On Washington's behalf, Fox and Canadian prime minister Paul Martin led a failed effort in Argentina to get the FTAA into the gathering's deliberations and final document.

At the November 19 rally, Venezuelan foreign minister Ali Rodríguez and other government officials rejected Fox's demand for an apology. Vice President José Vicente Rangel called for reestablishing normal relations with Mexico, but not through "apologies as the government of that country demands."

Wearing a sombrero, Chávez sang Mexican ballads with a mariachi band and praised "the people of Mexico." He said Washington is behind the dispute. "The one to blame for this lamentable conflict is none other than Mr. Danger,"

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— ON THE PICKET LINE —

GM announces plant closings

The world's largest automaker, General Motors, announced plans November 21 to lay off 30,000 employees in North America by 2008—5,000 more than it had projected in June. CEO Richard Wagoner listed the nine plants slated for closing. Factories to be shut down are in Doraville, Georgia; one in Flint and two in Lansing, Michigan; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Pittsburgh; Spring Hill, Tennessee; and two near Toronto.

Aiming to quiet speculation of the company filing for bankruptcy protection, Wagoner said GM would save \$7 billion a year with the cuts. In October, GM won concessions from the United Auto Workers that will save the company billions of dollars a year by reducing health-care benefits for active workers and retirees.

The *Detroit News* reports that Ford Motors “plans to announce deep restructuring in January—its second in less the five years—that will call for significant plant closings and job cuts.”

—Arrin Hawkins

Judge slashes fines on Alabama coal operator for mining deaths

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—Fines against Alabama coal boss Jim Walter Resources for actions leading to the deaths of 13 miners have been reduced from \$435,000 to a miserly \$3,000. Administrative Law Judge David Barbour ruled November 2 the mine owners hadn't deliberately broken federal mining law and their violations hadn't directly caused the accident in which the miners died.

On Sept. 23, 2001, two explosions ripped through the company's Blue Creek #5 mine in Brookwood, Alabama, killing the miners. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) issued

eight citations against the company for conditions and practices that led to the explosions. Judge Barbour has vacated six and modified the remaining two.

In the four weeks before the explosions, MSHA cited Jim Walter Resources 10 times for “serious” violations, including five related to roof control. The mine owners received 52 other citations during the same period, including at least 18 for accumulation of combustible material.

—Clay Dennison

Virginia day laborers confront harassment by Minutemen

HERNDON, Virginia—“We know we have rights,” said Roberto Torres, a Honduran-born construction worker. “We don't want to make any trouble, but we won't be intimidated by them.” He was referring to about a dozen members of the local Minutemen chapter who have tried to harass immigrant workers. Each morning starting around 5:00 a.m. Torres joins nearly 200 other day laborers in a 7-Eleven parking lot in search of work.

In August the city council approved a proposal to provide day laborers with a hiring and training center. It is scheduled to open in December, Torres said.

In November the anti-immigrant Minuteman Project began taking photographs and videos of the workers and potential employers, and following them to their work sites and homes. Organizers of the vigilante outfit say they will turn over the information they gather to immigration authorities and the Internal Revenue Service.

—Sam Manuel

Unionists across Australia protest antilabor laws

SYDNEY, Australia—More than 500,000 workers rallied across Australia

Medical students demand health care for all



Militant/Paul Pederson

NEW YORK—Some 200 medical students and others marched across the Brooklyn Bridge and rallied in downtown Manhattan November 12 to demand universal access nationwide to health care, prescription medications, and preventive medicine. The protest was sponsored by the American Medical Student Association, which was holding a regional conference that weekend. “Health care should be a right not a privilege,” Kao-Ping Chua, a student at Washington University School of Medicine, told the *Militant*. Wanda Guy, 26, a medical student at Howard University who participated in the world youth festival in Caracas, Venezuela, in August, commented on the role of Cuban doctors in the world. “They're doing phenomenal work,” Guy said. “Cuban physicians are saving lives globally. It's more than just talk, it's action.”

—PAUL PEDERSON

lia November 15 in a national day of action called by the Australian Council of Trade Unions under the banner “Your Rights at Work. Worth Fighting For.”

The protests condemned antiunion laws introduced by the federal Liberal/National coalition government that are aimed at dramatically increasing the scope bosses have to gut collective bargaining in favor of nonunion individual contracts. The new laws also target minimum wages and conditions codified for decades in industry-wide “awards.”

Some 45,000 marched in central Sydney, and more than 200,000 in Melbourne. More than 300 “stop work” rallies and marches were organized around the country.

—Bob Aiken

New Zealand unionists solidarize with Australian workers

Under the banner “Australian unions under attack,” the national union federation in New Zealand called protest rallies outside Australian diplomatic offices in Auckland and Wellington in solidarity with the actions in Australia.

Among the 150 who gathered at the protest in Auckland called by the Council of Trade Unions (CTU) were representatives from the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union, National Distribution Union, and the Maritime Union.

In Wellington, CTU Maori Vice President Sharon Clair told 150 rally participants that in the 1990s many workers fled New Zealand to Australia, where wages remain 30 percent higher. However, because of measures being introduced by the Australian government they now face the same fight there

—Terry Coggan
and Christine Beresford

THE MILITANT

Unequaled labor coverage

With an upswing in the number of strikes, along with ongoing organizing drives and other forms of working-class resistance to the bosses' assaults on wages and job conditions, now's the time to follow the 'Militant's' unparalleled labor coverage.



Copper workers picket Asarco's smelter in Hayden, Arizona, in September. They returned to work Nov. 16 after pushing back company concessions.

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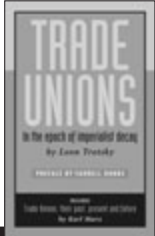
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Bipartisan war party

Continued from front page

say to us how long it will take to train the number of Iraqi troops that we need,” said Democratic senator Barbara Boxer of California. “And, of course, we understand if something slips, we’re not going to hold you to it.”

The defeated amendment did not actually set a date for withdrawal. It would have “asked the administration to provide a rough schedule for when conditions would be met to begin pulling out troops,” the *Marine Corps Times* reported November 15.

While Democrats made much of their demand for regular updates, several federal government agencies already provide such quarterly reports to Congress.

The senators passed other amendments that the liberal media described as an indication of “willingness to defy the president” on Iraq policy, as one Associated Press report put it. The article cited as an example an amendment calling on the administration to “restrict the techniques used to interrogate terror detainees.”

The resolution adopted by the Senate stated that 2006 “should be a period of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty, with Iraqi security forces taking the lead for the security of a free and sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions for a phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq.”

While no alternative course was proposed by the critics of the White House, the factional tone of the debate has become sharper. The ballot was “a vote of no confidence on the president’s policies in Iraq,” declared Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada.

The Republican majority leader, Sen. Bill Frist of Tennessee, countered, “It is an absolute repudiation of the cut-and-run strategy put forward by the Democrats.”

No shift to the left

The recent votes in Congress discredited suggestions by the liberal media that the November 8 election results signified a shift to the left. The *New York Times* and other such dailies trumpeted the Democratic victories in the gubernatorial races in New Jersey

and Virginia, as well as the defeat of all the ballot initiatives backed by Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, as evidence of such a change.

At the same time, liberal claims that a new conservative majority in the Supreme Court will reverse social gains such as a woman’s right to choose abortion remain unfounded. This was acknowledged in a November 17 *Washington Post* article that stated, “Reversal of the landmark Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide could produce an upheaval in U.S. politics and would put candidates who oppose abortion rights at risk of defeat.”

Republican congressman Thomas Davis of Virginia, chairman of the Government Reform Committee, told the *Post* that overturning *Roe v. Wade* would lead to the defeat of many Republican politicians. “It would be a sea change in suburban voting patterns,” he said.

Clinton backs war

On November 17, former president William Clinton, accompanying Democratic senator Hillary Clinton on a Mideast tour to promote her 2008 presidential prospects, made highly publicized remarks in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, criticizing many of the Bush administration’s tactics in the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

“The American government made several errors,” Clinton said, “one of which is how easy it would be to get rid of Saddam and how hard it would be to unite the country.” He complained that the Bush administration had not planned adequately for what would happen after it overthrew the Iraqi government.

Defenders of the administration have waged a sharp counterattack against its critics, including their charge that the White House “lied” about intelligence to make the case for war. That accusation has been hurled about in the controversy around the indictment of White House adviser Lewis Libby and the “spy leak” affair.

On November 16, Vice President Richard Cheney accused Democratic senators of making “one of the most dishonest and reprehensible charges ever

N.Y.: hundreds pay tribute to Puerto Rican independence fighter Filiberto Ojeda Ríos



Militant/Willie Cotton

Puerto Rican independence fighter and former political prisoner Rafael Cancel Miranda speaks at November 18 meeting of more than 500 in New York. The event honored the life of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, a leader of the pro-independence group Los Macheteros, who was killed by FBI agents September 23. Former political prisoners Edwin Cortés and Antonio Camacho Negrón also spoke.

aired.” Two days earlier Bush called the criticism “irresponsible” and damaging to U.S. soldiers’ morale.

On November 11 the *Investor’s Business Daily* published a list of quotes from before the 2003 invasion of Iraq by then-president Clinton and other prominent Democrats, showing that their actual record has consistently been in support of Washington’s course toward war.

“If Saddam rejects peace and we have to use force, our purpose is clear,” said Clinton in 1998, as quoted in the business paper. “We want to seriously diminish the threat posed by Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction.”

The liberal media itself has added to the factional and caustic tone of the debate in U.S. ruling circles. Daily papers ran misleading headlines about Clinton’s Dubai speech that portrayed him as an opponent of the Iraq war.

The actual news reports, however, contradicted the headlines. “Saddam is gone. It’s a good thing,” Clinton said. He expressed support for overthrowing the Iraqi government, the ratification of a new constitution, and the holding of parliamentary elections in U.S.-occupied Iraq.

Clinton added that he didn’t “agree with what was done.” What was the

disagreement? “We never sent enough troops and didn’t have enough troops to control or seal the borders,” Clinton said. Washington should have left Iraq’s “fundamental military and social and police structure intact.”

Murtha’s bluff exposed

Similarly, the *Washington Post* and other liberal papers portrayed Democratic congressman John Murtha’s November 17 call for removing U.S. troops from Iraq as a “turning point,” as a November 18 *Washington Post* column by Howard Kurtz put it. “The landscape is changing as politicians scramble to catch up with polls showing a majority sees the war is a blunder,” Kurtz wrote.

Murtha, described by the press as a “hawkish Democrat with close ties to the military,” called for a U.S. pullout over six months. He advocated replacing the current troops with a Marine quick-reaction force, possibly based in Kuwait. His argument was that “our troops have become the primary target of the insurgency.”

House Republicans responded to Murtha’s statement by calling for a vote on November 18 to reject any immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. “We want to make sure that we support our troops that are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan,” stated the Republican speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert.

In response, Democratic congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, the House minority leader, complaining that the quick vote was a maneuver, “sent word to the rank-and-file to vote with the Republicans against immediate withdrawal of American troops,” AP reported.

The debate leading up to the vote was rancorous as Democrats and Republicans tried to outdo each other on who is more “patriotic.” Republican congresswoman Jean Schmidt of Ohio, for example, said she had spoken to a Marine colonel who asked her to “send Congress a message: Stay the course.”

The colonel also asked her, Schmidt said, “to send Congressman Murtha a message: Cowards cut and run. Marines never do.” Democrats erupted in boos and shouts. “You guys are pathetic!” yelled Rep. Martin Meehan of Massachusetts.

Despite the heat, however, nearly all House Democrats, including Murtha, joined their Republican colleagues in voting down the motion to rapidly withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

U.S. Congress ready to renew antidemocratic Patriot Act

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—U.S. House and Senate negotiators reached an agreement November 16 to extend all 16 provisions of the Patriot Act granting broad spying and surveillance powers to the federal government that were set to expire at the end of this year. Final approval by the full House and Senate is expected shortly.

“After months of vitriolic debate, the tentative agreement represents a significant and somewhat surprising victory for the Bush administration in maintaining the government’s expanded powers to investigate, monitor and track terror suspects,” noted a November 17 *New York Times* article.

The deal would make permanent 14 provisions of the Patriot Act. Two other measures, including one that would require libraries and bookstores to provide records of the kinds of books obtained by visitors and customers, would be extended for seven years—three years longer than had been proposed in the Senate version.

The House and Senate negotiators also agreed to extend “roving wiretaps” for seven years. Under this measure phones taps could be placed on individuals even though they are not suspects, but on the basis that someone who is suspected of “terrorism” may use their line.

Their agreement also extends for seven years a separate “lone wolf” law that allows government surveillance of a person suspected of terrorism but not connected to any government.

A package of measures in the House version of the bill would add 41 additional offenses to 20 “terrorism-related” felonies that can now result in capital punishment. If passed, the law would allow prosecutors to seek the death penalty for individuals who contributed financially to an organization deemed “terrorist” by the U.S. government, even if the donation was earmarked for educational or charitable purposes.

The measures would also allow defendants to be tried by less than 12 jurors. The House-Senate deal also extends the federal death penalty “to

those who knowingly transport materials used in a deadly terrorist attack, those who help plot a deadly attack on a mass transit system, and those who participate in a deadly attack on ships and maritime facilities,” the *Washington Post* reported.

In a related matter, records released in October under the Freedom of Information Act show that with expanded surveillance powers under the Patriot Act the FBI has snooped on one person for at least five years without proper paperwork, intercepted e-mails after warrants expired, seized bank records without authority, and carried out an improper “unconsented physical search.”

The Patriot Act was passed with broad bipartisan support after Sept. 11, 2001. It allows police to carry out arbitrary searches and seizures in private homes and businesses, expands police powers to wiretap phones and personal e-mail, allows domestic CIA spying, and authorizes police to jail immigrants without charges as “terrorist suspects,” among other provisions.

Wage cuts at Northwest

Continued from front page
west signaled its intention to create a subsidiary called New Co. that would use 1,500 pilots to fly new 70–100 seat planes at further reduced pay.

Warning of a possible pilots’ strike, Mark McClain, who heads the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) at Northwest, warned, “I don’t see how we go there. They are blinded by their arrogance.”

More than 800 Delta Airlines pilots and supporters rallied in Atlanta November 15 and warned that they will walk out if the bankruptcy court agrees to Delta’s demand to void their contract and impose \$325 million in further concessions on top of \$1 billion they had earlier agreed to.

Howling that the potential strike would be a “murder-suicide” that would put the company out of business, Delta, which filed for bankruptcy protection September 14, claims a walkout would be illegal because it would violate the Railway Labor Act.

On November 16, the bankruptcy judge postponed a decision on Delta’s demand until November 28.

Meanwhile, at the November 19 rally here, people gave loud applause to Rachel Bailey, a high school student at Bloomington-Jefferson and leader of Youth Against War and Racism. Bailey welcomed strikers to the school and described a walkout of 300 students she was part of to protest the war in Iraq. “When we see the layoffs, the cutbacks,

and other injustices you face, it makes us sick—we offer you our solidarity,” she said.

Ted Ludwig, president of Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) Local 33, referred to the company attacks on other airline unions, and said, “If you decide to walk out we will be there to do everything we can to help you get through this.”

“This strike is still winnable,” said Joe Crisco from AMFA Local 9, which represents United Airlines mechanics in San Francisco. “No matter what the media says, or other union officials, there’s still time to push the leadership to honor the picket lines.” He then presented two striking AMFA locals and IAM workers honoring the picket lines with \$10,300 in donations.

Dennis Sutton, a vice-president of AMFA Local 5 from Detroit, announced plans for a similar rally there. O.V. Delle-Femine, AMFA’s national director, also announced plans for a national labor rally to support the strike.

After Shane Bastien, a United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) organizer from local 789, spoke, Rebecca Johnson, an IAM member who has honored the mechanic’s picket lines, asked other IAM members who were doing the same to stand up to a round of applause. She then described the different union meetings where she has spoken to get support for the strike. “Whether they are, AFL-CIO or not,

Protesters counter racist rally in Kingston, N.Y.



AP/Keith Ferris

KINGSTON, New York—Some 200 people (in pen on right) turned out November 19 at the local high school here to protest a racist rally organized by Harold Turner, the host of a white-supremacist radio show broadcast from New Jersey. Seizing on a fight between a Black and a white student at the school, Turner’s call drew some 30 Ku Klux Klan members and Nazis from the region (on left side with signs). About half of the counterdemonstrators were unable to make it to the rally site due to police restrictions on access.

—PAUL PEDERSON

we’ve spoken to a lot of unions and they’ve come to the picket lines,” she said. “The support is out there.”

In a separate interview, Mike Kl-
emm, national and local strike orga-
nizer for AMFA, described a UFCW
Local 789 union meeting he and other
strikers spoke at where a member un-
expectedly propose a \$3,000 donation
that was unanimously approved. He
described being invited to speak at
Laborers Local 138 by Bobby Casper,
the business agent. About 40 of the 100

union members went from that meet-
ing to join the mechanics’ picket lines.
There was a similar response when he
and other strikers addressed the gas
workers union, he said, where they got
\$700 in donations.

The final speaker at the rally was
Ray Rodgers from the Corporate
Campaign. He outlined a plan to pres-
sure the Northwest board of directors
through leafleting and picketing loca-
tions such as the National Association
of Manufacturers.

Welcome, 3,200 new readers!

Continued from front page
party—both Democrats and Repub-
licans,” Perasso said.

“This response to the *Militant* was marked by the interest of rank-and-file workers on the front lines of resistance to the bosses’ antilabor offensive.”

A month before the campaign began, mechanics and cleaners at Northwest Airlines walked out, the first major airline strike in 15 years. Sales of the *Militant* to airline workers immediately

jumped around the country—and have continued.

Readers brought the paper to ports across the U.S. and other countries to extend solidarity with the fight by inde-
pendent truckers for union recognition in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Drivers eagerly snapped up sub-
scriptions, including 36 in Newark.

For campaigners in Des Moines and the Twin Cities, sales to packinghouse workers in the region were key to the nearly 350 subscriptions sold there. Forty-two new readers signed up in Norfolk, Nebraska, where a large slaughterhouse has been the site of recent union struggles.

In Canada, *Militant* supporters won dozens of new readers through regular solidarity visits to the picket lines at the Lakeside Packers slaughterhouse in Alberta, where workers won a contract after a hard-fought strike. Subbers in Canada doubled their quota in the final weeks of the drive and went well over the top.

In Livingston, California, about 50 new subscribers were won to the paper at the picket lines of poultry workers fighting for union recognition at the Foster Farms plant there and in door-to-door sales in the community.

“A new generation of young social-
ists made connections to these fight-
ing workers through the sub drive,” Perasso noted. A number joined the Young Socialists through that effort. In Detroit, YS members at Wayne State took on a quota for the first time and sold a dozen subs.

“I’m confident the momentum from this campaign will translate into steady expansion of the readership of the *Mili-
tant*,” Perasso said. “We encourage all readers to sign up friends, relatives, and co-workers and renew their own sub before it expires.”

Socialist Workers party-building fund goes over the top, raising \$92,515

BY ANGEL LARISCY

NEWARK, New Jersey—As we reached the finish line, the tally was \$92,500 for the Socialist Workers party-
building fund, surpassing the national target. Supporters in every area met or exceeded their quota, after a dozen in-
creased their goal during the drive.

This annual fund helps finance the work of the Socialist Workers Party.

“Close to 100 people contributed to the fund here,” said Peter Thierjung of New York. “Of those, about 25 in-
creased their pledges during the drive motivated by workers’ resistance to the bosses attacks on wages and benefits and the increased political receptiv-
ity to the *Militant* and socialist elec-
tion campaigns.”

Those most successful lined up pledges early in the drive and col-
lected weekly. “We sent out person-
alized letters to a large list early on and followed up with discussions,” said Wendy Lyons of Los Angeles. By the time L.A. supporters held a public fund-raiser, half way through the drive, they had collected a good amount of the pledges. After a pre-
sentation by Olympia Newton on the new political situation, many decided to increase their contributions.

Newton, as well as other speak-
ers in similar fund-raisers across the country, explained that millions today anticipate a tumultuous future marked by economic depression, wars, and heated class battles. The wealthy rulers can’t find an alterna-
tive to this course, which results in a crisis of confidence in themselves, in their “historic mission”—imposing what they describe as “democracy”

along with “free markets.” Bourgeois politics is marked by factionalism and instability. In contrast to this seemingly bleak picture, working-class resistance to the bosses’ attacks points the road forward: the need to build a workers and farmers movement that will lead a fight by working people to take power out of the hands of the ruling billionaire class, establish a workers and farmers government, and join the worldwide struggle for socialism.

The success of the fund indicates the attraction to this perspective among many working people and youth.

Fall 2005 'Militant' Sub Drive September 17–November 20 Week 9 of 9 * Final chart			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
CANADA*	150	168	112%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London**	100	112	112%
Edinburgh**	45	47	104%
UK total	145	159	110%
NEW ZEALAND			
Auckland*	40	46	115%
Christchurch*	25	25	100%
N.Z. total	65	71	109%
SWEDEN*	35	38	109%
UNITED STATES			
Birmingham*	75	95	127%
Atlanta**	115	140	122%
Des Moines*	150	178	119%
Salt Lake City*	45	53	118%
San Francisco*	95	109	115%
Miami*	120	136	113%
Price, UT*	80	84	105%
Philadelphia*	125	131	105%
Twin Cities*	160	167	104%
Newark**	270	279	103%
Pittsburgh*	100	103	103%
Seattle*	100	102	102%
Washington*	100	102	102%
Los Angeles**	200	203	102%
New York**	450	455	101%
Boston*	120	121	101%
Houston*	125	126	101%
Chicago*	115	112	97%
Detroit*	20	12	60%
U.S. total	2,565	2,708	106%
AUSTRALIA**	45	46	102%
ICELAND	22	20	91%
Int'l totals	3,027	3,210	107%
Goal/Should be	3,000	3,000	100%
*raised quota **raised quota more than once			

\$90,000 SWP Party-Building Fund Sept. 11–Nov. 20: Final Chart		
	Pledge	Collected %
Houston	3,500	4,053 116%
Boston*	3,300	3,527 107%
Newark	4,000	4,258 106%
Price, UT*	1,800	1,904 106%
Philadelphia*	3,250	3,426 105%
Los Angeles*	9,500	10,010 105%
Twin Cities	4,500	4,619 103%
Chicago	5,000	5,100 102%
Pittsburgh*	3,800	3,878 102%
Atlanta*	6,500	6,570 101%
Seattle*	8,600	8,707 101%
Birmingham*	2,300	2,300 100%
Des Moines*	1,750	1,752 100%
Miami*	1,850	1,856 100%
New York*	14,000	14,037 100%
San Francisco	9,500	9,530 100%
Salt Lake City*	1,100	1,100 100%
Washington	3,000	3,006 100%
Other	2,882	2,882 100%
TOTAL	90,132	92,515 103%
Goal/should be	90,000	90,000 100%
*raised quota		

You love New Orleans landlords—Court dockets have been flooded with evic-



Harry Ring

tion hearings for some of the estimated 8,000 to 10,000 absent tenants. After an eviction notice is posted, tenants have

24 hours to remove their belongings. While some tenants' rights groups have called the process unfair to those with no means of returning home, the benefits to landlords can be great. Few apartments and thousands seeking shelter mean higher rents.

Capitalism, the big easy—"In 1980, the average CEO earned about 42 times the pay of the average worker, but now CEOs earn about 431 times what the average worker does, according to the AFL-

CIO. And the pay is rising at a rapid clip. The average CEO took home a 91 percent raise in 2004 according to the Corporate Library, even as workers got raises amounting to less than 4 percent on average."—*Los Angeles Times*

Would GM swindle you?—"General Motors said that it planned to restate its earnings from 2001 because an accounting error led the company to overstate its earnings by up to 35 percent. GM disclosed the

error after the markets closed. Earlier in the day, Fitch Ratings lowered GM's debt deeper into 'junk' status. The automaker's shares fell to a 13-year low."—*Associated Press*.

P.S.—"DETROIT—Continuing bad news for General Motors rattled Wall Street, dragging down shares industrywide and fueling further speculation that the company could file for bankruptcy protection, fire its CEO, or both."—*USA Today*.

The can-do society—Several weeks ago, a steadfast reader sent us a clipping from the *Arizona Sun*. It provided an article from Tombstone, a dot on the map. The lone high school was built in 1922. This past summer a spanking new high school for 350 students was built at a cost of \$7 million. The new school sits atop a hillside 75 miles from a highway. About a month or so ago, there was no way to get the students and teachers to make it to the school from the highway.

China: working people protest layoffs, unsafe conditions

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Protests by workers and farmers in China against deteriorating job and living conditions and growing social inequalities are on the rise, according to government officials in Beijing. Millions have been involved in such actions, sometimes involving bloody clashes with cops.

Working people face growing unemployment and high taxes in the cities and loss of farmland in rural areas. These conditions are the result of government policies that promote foreign investment and capitalist market methods in growing sections of the economy as industrialization accelerates.

SWP supporters' financial campaign: a resounding success

BY SARA GATES

SEATTLE—"A resounding success on all fronts!" That's how a November 15 letter described the results of the campaign launched in June to increase the monthly financial contributions to the Socialist Workers Party from supporters and friends of the party. The steering committee organizing this effort—based here and made up of Scott Breen, Sara Gates, and Pat O'Reilly—sends such newsletters to contributors every month. These contributions make it possible for the SWP to have the financial resources to respond to political developments.

At a workshop in June held in conjunction with the SWP convention, party supporters decided to raise monthly pledges to \$26,850 a month, or \$322,200 a year—an annual increase of \$7,200. Since then, they raised this goal twice and topped that too. Now, 368 people are contributing over \$28,000 a month, or \$336,000 annually—a \$21,000 yearly increase.

The effort netted 18 new donors, pledging \$605. Another 150 people raised their pledges. In all, 43 percent of contributors increased pledges, compared to 18 percent in 2004.

"This victory is another registration of the changed political situation and uptick in working-class struggles that the SWP first gauged through the dramatically heightened response to the *Militant* subscription drive, the election campaigns, and Pathfinder sales," said the November 15 letter.

If you would like to contribute to this effort, please get in touch with SWP supporters nearest you (see directory on page 8).

Zhou Yongkang, China's top police official, said 74,000 major protests took place in 2004, involving 3.7 million people. That's up from 58,000 protests a year earlier. In August Beijing announced plans to establish special police units in 36 cities to deal with such actions.

In October, 4,000 steelworkers and family members reportedly blocked traffic and clashed with police to protest layoffs at the Chongqing Special Steelworks. Another 10,000 steelworkers demonstrated September 20 at the headquarters of the Anshan Iron and Steel Group, which recently merged with another company to form China's second-largest steelmaker, according to the Interfax News Agency. Protests by workers are becoming a trend as large state-owned companies close or merge with others to become more competitive and efficient.

Rapid industrialization in rural areas has also led to protests against detrimental effects on the environment. In April, over 20,000 residents of the Huaxi township fought with about 3,000 cops while protesting pollution from chemical plants.

Protests by farmers are also on the

rise as they are increasingly forced off the land to make way for factories and office complexes. In November earthmovers mowed down hundreds of tea and fruit trees that provide a livelihood for farming families in Xishan, reported the *Los Angeles Times*. Three families were removed to make way for a software park. Farmers say local officials announced plans last year to seize 30 acres of land, evicting 128 families. Last year China's legislature received 5,407 formal complaints about land seizures.

In October the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, began deliberation on a bill that would for the first time allow individual farmers to sell land. Land in China remains nationalized with individual farmers having long-term renewable leases.

Widening social inequalities are a factor in the protests. Annual incomes in the cities now average over \$1,000, compared to \$370 in rural areas. The National People's Congress recently doubled the maximum level at which people are exempt from income taxes to 1,600 yuan (\$200) a month.

Beijing is also considering loosening residency restrictions to meet labor shortages in 11 provinces, reported

Reuters. One of the provinces, Guangdong, where migration accounts for more than a quarter of its 110 million inhabitants, still expects to fall short of its labor needs by 1 million workers. One proposal would end the official disparity in access to health care, education, and social security between rural and city dwellers to encourage the movement of workers.

Foreign companies invested \$60 billion in China last year to produce consumer goods for a growing domestic middle class. For example, there are now 377 million cell phone users in China, nearly twice as many as in the United States.

China's industry is fueled by coal—providing about 67 percent of energy needs. Thousands of workers die in mine accidents in China annually. From January to September of this year, 4,228 people were killed in such accidents, reported the Chinese news agency Xinhua.

Beijing announced it would close 4,000 mines considered unsafe. In addition, it has ordered that a least one manager accompany workers in the mine during each shift, according to *Beijing News*.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 5, 1980

PHILADELPHIA—Fifteen hundred Black activists met here November 21–23 at a convention that founded the National Black Independent Political Party.

Convention coordinator Ron Daniels spoke at a press conference that day before the convention opened. "The independent National Black Political Party, which we gather to give form and direction to this weekend, must be at the center of a new national mobilization and campaign against racism."

The convention called for a national congress of the new party for the summer of 1981...

The convention also adopted a charter, outlining the principles and structure of the new party. The preamble of the charter states: "Our party will not be like the Democratic and Republican parties....

"There are two kinds of mass parties, bourgeois and progressive....

"The progressive party exists to serve the interests of the working class and the poor, therefore our party will actively oppose racism, sexism, capitalism and imperialism."



December 5, 1955

The fight against Jim Crow in transportation registered an important legal victory on Nov. 25 when the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled against segregation in trains, buses and waiting rooms. The ruling followed the pattern of the Supreme Court decisions on segregated schools and parks. The ICC, however, ordered the railroads and bus companies to cease their Jim Crow practices by Jan. 10, 1956.

The response of the Southern white-supremacist politicians was immediate defiance. They announced that Jim Crow would go on as before. Their statements indicated a number of devices they will use to cheat the Negro people of the fruits of their legal victory.

The ICC ruling applies only to train and bus travel between states and waiting rooms for interstate travelers. Thirteen Southern states have segregation laws for travel facilities. Constitutionally such laws apply only to travel within the state. In practice the same bus and railroad waiting rooms are used both by interstate and intrastate travelers.



December 1, 1930

The optimistic pledges of "recovery and stability"—the principal stock in trade of the capitalist politicians—have proved to be empty words calculated to soothe the discontentment of the workers.

The crisis, instead of showing signs of let-down, is becoming deeper. It is drawing into its train ever new thousands of workers, and marches hand in hand with the winter months to spread misery, hunger, and cold to every part of the land.

The capitalist class, and its agent Hoover, while doling out their measly charity to a few in order to allay working-class resentment, retain their fundamental idea on how to solve the crisis. Their program is: "Deflate labor!" Wage-slashing, the lengthening of hours, the speeding up of labor, the "stagger plan," which means reducing the standard of living of the American workers at least half—these are the methods by which the ruling class is issuing out of its crisis at the expense solely of the workers.

‘Cuba’s experience is at your disposal’

Víctor Dreke, Cuba’s ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, speaks at first book fair in Malabo

Below are major excerpts of remarks given by Víctor Dreke on the opening day of the First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair, held October 17–20 at the National University campus in Malabo, the capital of that Central African country. Dreke, Cuba’s ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, was presenting *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*, published in both Spanish and English by Pathfinder Press.

The book is an interview with Dreke on his five-decade-long record as a revolutionary fighter. He recounts his involvement as a teenager in the underground struggle and revolutionary war that overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship in Cuba in 1959, and his role as a commander of the volunteer units of workers, peasants, and youth that defeated the CIA-organized counterrevolutionary bands in the Escambray mountains of central Cuba in the early 1960s. He describes his participation in 1965 in the column of Cuban internationalist volunteer combatants—as second in command under Ernesto Che Guevara—that fought in the Congo alongside Congolese liberation fighters.

In 1966–68 Dreke headed Cuba’s military mission in Guinea-Bissau—then fighting for its independence from Portugal—and the Republic of Guinea (Guinea-Conakry). In subsequent years he has served as a representative of the Cuban Revolution throughout Africa. Dreke has been Cuba’s ambassador to Equatorial Guinea since October 2003.

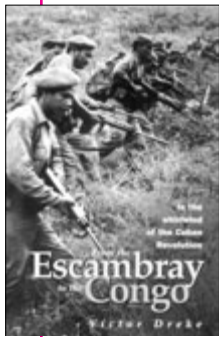
The translation from Spanish and the subtitles are by the *Militant*.



BY VÍCTOR DREKE

We would like to express our appreciation, on behalf of the Cubans in

From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution



In this participant’s account, Víctor Dreke describes how easy it became after the Cuban Revolution to “take down the rope” segregating blacks from whites in the town square, yet how enormous was the battle to transform social relations underlying all the “ropes” inherited from capitalism and Yankee domination. He recounts the determination, internationalism, and creative joy with which working people have defended their revolutionary course against U.S. imperialism—from Cuba’s own Escambray mountains, to the Americas, Africa, and beyond. Also available in Spanish. \$17

www.pathfinderpress.com



Militant/Martin Koppel

At First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair on October 17, Cuban ambassador Víctor Dreke presents *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*. From left: university rector Carlos Nse Nsuga; Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press; Dreke; Ana Morales, first secretary of Cuban embassy (obscured); Pedro Ndong Asumu, vice-rector at Bata campus; and Trinidad Morgades, vice-rector at Malabo.

Equatorial Guinea and of the Cuban people, for the magnificent event that is taking place for the first time in this country.

In 1966 I had my first opportunity to meet Equatorial Guineans living in exile in Guinea-Conakry, whose president was *compañero* [Ahmed] Sékou-Touré. At that time I never imagined I would come here and present a book in your country, which is now free and independent.

On October 1, 2003, when I arrived here officially as Cuba’s ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, we set out to do everything possible to give what little help our people and our government could offer the Guinean people and its government. And I personally gave this book, which is being presented publicly here for the first time, to the honorable president [Teodoro] Obiang.

It was a real joy when a few days ago, on October 12 during the celebration of the 37th anniversary of this country’s independence, the president told us, “I read the book and I liked it.”

Let’s talk a little about this book. Don’t be alarmed by the photo on the cover. Times have changed. I was young then, like you, and got involved in the struggle when I was 15. I was a Black kid from the *barrio*, a poor and humble barrio, where the houses had dirt floors. That’s where I was born. The situation at that time demanded a struggle against a dictatorship, the Batista dictatorship, which you’ll read about in the book.

I joined the movement, as I studied and worked, and became active in the revolutionary struggle. Time passed. I was jailed and had to leave my home town clandestinely. I went into the mountains and joined the revolutionary forces.

In 1959 the revolution triumphed. Twenty years old at the time of this victory, I had to take on various responsibilities, which are described here in the book. The title we chose for the book is *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*. That is because something new happened every day in the revolution. We had triumphed, but part of Batista’s army still existed, even though the rest had been defeated by our troops, by the

people. Every day the Cuban people were being attacked.

And, finally the U.S. government—I’ll say it quietly, so no ones gets scared or is offended—landed groups of mercenaries, who took up arms in nearly all the provinces of Cuba, of which there were six at that time.

Here there are *compañeros* who have studied in Cuba and know that at the time it was a country of 6 million—currently 11 million—and in an area of 110,000 square kilometers [42,000 square miles], a small country defending itself against that assault.

In this photo you can see that the people involved were workers, peasants, students, and other young people who were fighting to defend the victory of the revolution. This struggle, which defeated the mercenaries, was very important and very powerful.

Respect for national sovereignty

In 1965 the revolution and Fidel [Castro] gave me the tremendous opportunity of coming to Africa—to Congo-Léopoldville, today the Democratic Republic of the Congo—to fight together with Commander Ernesto Che Guevara and a group of 130 Cuban *compañeros* under the leadership of the Congolese liberation movement.

In the countries where we have been—at that time, as combatants, and today assisting in the country’s development—the Cuban Revolution has always adhered to and will continue to adhere to the principle that those who decide things are the citizens of that country. We have always respected the decisions of the citizens of the country we are in, and have done what they have said, whether we agreed totally or partially or not at all. That is the principle of respect for a country’s national sovereignty. That is why, whatever event Cuba takes part in, we put our heart and soul into it, but when the leadership of that country makes a decision, we support it.

When we arrived in Equatorial Guinea in 2003, one of the things we thought we could help with was cultural development. We came here not just to offer experiences—we don’t consider ourselves wise men or wizards. Besides, we don’t like to talk about ourselves

or about Cuba. We came to have an exchange and learn from you, and to say: here is Cuba’s modest contribution. Cuba’s experience is at your disposal; you can do the same here or not. That is a principle of the Cuban Revolution. [Applause]

We are very happy today that this first book fair is taking place. We too began this way with our first book fair in Havana. Today we do the fair throughout the country. Millions of books are sold at the Cuban book fair, which is an international fair.

Some day you too will do it throughout the country. You’re off to a good start, in our opinion, because you’ve done it with determination and held it at a center for

young people.

Before the end of our first fair, we had already formed the committee for the second fair, and the call was made for the second fair. And we went on from there.

Our people, like you, like all peoples, has a historic culture. But culture is like a plant: it has to be fertilized, it must be watered in order to advance; otherwise it starts to wither. In our country, which had been ruled by capitalism for many years, we had to bring culture to the masses, and the Cuban government decided to develop culture.

But in a country of 6 million inhabitants at that time, we had half a million illiterates. The first thing we carried out was a literacy campaign so that the entire population could read. Otherwise, who were the books for? Who was going to read the books? The capitalists, who were the ones who knew how to read? No. We wanted the young people to read—the future generations, everyone.

So the literacy campaign was organized. And the first book published in Cuba after the revolution—100,000 copies—was *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, in March 1959. [Applause]

That’s why I say: if we achieved that, it can be done, and we know you will be able to do it. And you can count on Cuba’s help.

We’re *compañeros* wherever we are

In the case of the Congo—which is mentioned in this book, along with other places we’ve been, such as Guinea-Bissau—we offered our modest participation. We lost six Cuban *compañeros* who died fighting in the Congo, and other *compañeros* gave their lives in other countries, as you know.

One of the principles of our revolution—I was telling the rector this the other day, and I’ll take advantage of the opportunity to say it here. Although some day you will be far away, we remain *compañeros*. No matter where in the world we find ourselves, we are always *compañeros*.

I was also explaining this to the *compañeros* from Pathfinder, who have done a lot of work. It cost them great effort to produce this book because, although it may not seem so, I always find

Disposal'

Central African nation

it difficult to talk about myself. But they succeeded, and I always congratulate them for that.

We've gone to many places, and now we find ourselves here in Equatorial Guinea. Here we have our doctors, agricultural experts, and educators, according to the agreements decided on by your government.

But we look forward to and are striving for the day that will come when our doctors, agricultural technicians, our support personnel will be replaced completely by compañeros from Equatorial Guinea. That is what Cuba and our teachers work for: training you to replace them.

We want you to be able to advance by yourselves. What people need, after receiving help, is to be able to develop by themselves: to have their own cadres who carry out their own decisions. That is what we did in Cuba.

This book talks about war, about forces, and many things that have changed with the times. Today we are engaged in an ideological battle—as commander Fidel Castro puts it, a battle of ideas. What is the battle of ideas? To teach the entire world to read and write. To bring health care to the entire world. To defend the national principles of each country.

Those of you who go to Cuba to study know that when you are there you celebrate your national day. And on that day—you can ask Carmela [Oyono Ayíngono], who studied in Cuba—they dress in their traditional clothing and carry out their traditional events. This is your country. We don't brainwash anyone.

We didn't come to Africa for oil

And we don't take with us anything from Africa or anywhere else. From Africa we have taken back to Cuba only two things: our dead—the more than 2,000 Cubans who have perished in combat in different African countries—and the hearts of the majority of Africans. [Applause]

But we haven't taken with us either oil or anything else. When we went to Angola we never asked for a drop of oil. We didn't go there for that. We went there because Angola needed the support of Cuban forces so that apartheid would no longer mistreat and suppress that country. And we've gone to other places because it was necessary.

Today there are more than 500 Cuban doctors in Guatemala. We haven't gone there in search of Guatemalan products, but to help Guatemalans in light of the misfortune they confront because of the consequences of Hurricane Stan. And right now Cuban doctors are heading to Pakistan, at the request of the government there, in the wake of the earthquake.

Nor did we come to Equatorial Guinea looking for anything—only your hearts, because we are brothers and sisters now and forever. It's important to state this for the youth present, because sometimes the question is asked: What are these people coming here for? To offer, alongside you, what little we have.

What joy it is to see how Equatorial Guinea progresses. It's not the Guinea I



Militant/Martin Koppel

Opening of first book fair in Equatorial Guinea, held October 17–20 at Malabo campus of National University of Equatorial Guinea.

knew in 2000 when I first arrived here at the Malabo airport, under a torrential downpour, and there were no lights. I could see two compañeros there with a little light shining so we could get off the plane. That's not the Malabo airport of today. It has been developed.

And what a joy that you already have a school of medicine. Sometimes the newspapers don't talk about that. You should talk about the medical school and about the doctors that are training there, of the more than 50 sixth-year students who will soon be arriving here from Cuba. We should talk about that! Because that shows the future for Equatorial Guinea. [Applause]

In Cuba, at the time of the revolutionary victory, we had 6,000 doctors, and we were left with 3,000, because the "friends" who live 90 miles from us—we'll say it quietly so they won't hear; everyone knows who they are!—took 3,000 doctors from us, and left us with 3,000. Yet today we have 67,000 doctors or more.

We are pleased to say that we have nearly 20,000 doctors serving in Venezuela, and we have doctors who have gone to Guatemala. The plane could not enter Guatemala; it had to stay in Honduras because of the storm conditions. They traveled by highway and there are still doctors who have not arrived at their destination because the rivers cannot be crossed. There are 500 doctors, with their backpacks on their shoulder, who are youth like yourselves. Guatemalans who had graduated from the School of Medicine in Cuba joined the group, of course, to respond to the situation in their country.

All of this is culture. Every person uses the words of their choice, but this is culture. Culture is vast, with so many places where it is developed and ways to develop it. It's the most important thing a people has.

When a people do not have culture, they simply cannot be free. That is why we understand the statement by president Obiang when he says to you that to be a cultured people is more important than to be a people that is wealthy. It's true, it's a wealth that can never be taken from you.

I am part of Africa

I was very moved by the poem by compañera Carmela. She is part of Cuba, just as I am part of Africa.

Why am I part of Africa? Because I had the opportunity to come to Africa and to sweat alongside Africans, because I had the opportunity to carry Africans and to see Africans carrying our dead in the Congo and in Guinea-Bissau. That is why I am part

of Africa, just like those of you who study in Cuba are part of Cuba. Your first country is Equatorial Guinea, but you have a little piece of Cuba in you. A piece of your heart is in Cuba, like ours is in Africa.

The young people will have a chance to read this book, and perhaps some day a meeting can be held, and we can explain more details and questions you may have here.

We would like to thank you again, and to thank the rector and the organizing committee of this event, which sets an example to follow.

We congratulate you for this book fair, and you will have Cuba's unconditional support for the second book fair. I also urge you to visit Cuba for the book fair in February to exchange experiences and take your books there.

Thank you for letting us talk here about our modest experiences.

A question and an answer

[After the presentation, a question was asked from the audience.]

Question: Our brother Fidel Castro, in his condemnation of imperialism, always says that Cubans have "the strength of the Black man, the shrewdness of the Indian, and the mala leche [orneriness—literally, "sour milk"] of the Spaniard. [Laughter and applause] Could you please comment?

Dreke: It's true we have those three things. The Indians lived in Cuba, but they disappeared, because those who say they discovered us in 1492 wiped out all the Indians. Those who invaded us and colonized us—fortunately, or unfortunately—were the same ones who colonized you.

And what have Blacks given us? Everything. On October 10, 1868—that's one of the reasons this month is important—Cubans rose up in arms against the Spanish colonial government. The leader of this revolt was Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, and together with them a large group of slaves rose up. Céspedes gave freedom to the slaves. They were the Black Africans that had been sent to Cuba in those years. So they united. That is the strength of the Blacks that we have.

And our "mala leche"—we have to say it as you do; in Cuba this is a vulgar term but here it seems it's not, so the female compañeras will excuse us for using this phrase—our "mala leche" is because for years we've had to confront imperialism. In 1902, when they say we became free and independent, we were not free. They imposed on us what was called the Platt Amendment, a law that gave the U.S. government the power to intervene in Cuba any time they wanted.

We had to rebel against this.

Later they installed their puppets, Batista and others before Batista. Until January 1, 1959, when the revolution triumphed, with Fidel Castro at the head. And ever since the victory of the revolution, they have wanted to crush us. We are respectful, but we will never let anyone crush us, nor are we going to sit by with our arms crossed. Now things have changed and it's with books... But if not—and I hope not—then... Well, I don't want to say a lot, because later they'll say I'm leading a subversive action here. [Laughter and applause]

Today we continue to stand up to more than four decades of a total blockade. Despite all that, whatever we have the means to do, we will do with you.

We must defend ourselves, just as you defended yourselves in March of last year from the attempted coup by the mercenaries. It so happens we live near a country that you know... We said we weren't going to talk about politics. [Laughter] Those involved in the conspiracy were South Africans, the South Africans who are *not* our friends—those in power, those like Mandela, are our friends—those who the Angolans and Cubans had defeated at Cuito Cuanavale, where we took away their reputation for being tough guys and for being the best army in the world after the Americans.*

And it's possible they might have taken it out on the poor little Cubans who are here, the Cuban doctors who aren't soldiers and who don't have any guns; we don't even have knives.

They would have had to kill us. Those South Africans might come, not only to take it out on the government of Equatorial Guinea, but to take the opportunity to take it out on the little Cubans who are here. They would say: "Those were the ones who made us run in Angola." Yes sir, they sure did run—with the Angolans chasing them, and we were there next to the Angolans! That's the truth.

So the orneriness is for the enemy. For everyone else it's hearts and flowers.

Well, is there another question...not as lechosa [sticky] as that one? [Laughter and applause]

[The event concluded and the moderator invited the audience to proceed to the book sale.]

*In 1988, Cuban and Angolan combatants defeated an invasion of Angola by the South African apartheid regime at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. In March 2004 an attempted coup against the government of Equatorial Guinea was aborted when South African and other mercenaries were arrested in both Zimbabwe and in Equatorial Guinea.

S.F. event: Africa and fight to transform world

BY NAOMI CRAINE

SAN FRANCISCO—Nearly 120 people attended a program here November 19 on Central Africa, imperialism, and the fight to transform the world. It was the second of four regional events featuring participants in the First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair. A team of socialist workers from the United States and United Kingdom participated with Pathfinder books in the fair, held in October at the National University of Equatorial Guinea.

Arrin Hawkins, one of those who took part in the team, said they learned more about the history of this former Spanish colony, the legacy of colonial rule and reality of imperialist domination in Africa today, and the thirst among youth and other Equatorial Guineans for books on the culture and history of their country and on struggles against imperialism around the world.

In addition to titles by revolutionary leaders Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, “we sold out of every title we brought by Malcolm X,” Hawkins said. The attraction to Malcolm’s explanation about the capacity of the oppressed to transform themselves and the world through struggle refutes the image promoted in imperialist countries of “Africans as poor suffering victims,” she noted.

Brian Taylor explained what they learned about the changing place of women. He pointed to the contradictions between the economic underdevelopment that has perpetuated women’s low social status in nations oppressed by imperialism, on one hand, and the growing self-confidence of many Guinean women today. One example was the significant role of women in organizing in the book fair. The pamphlet *Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* by Sankara sparked particular interest among young women.

Martin Koppel described discussions with Guineans who noted the contrast between the dark streets in the capital city Malabo and the blazing lights in

nearby Punta Europa, a virtually American city that is the center of the U.S. oil operations in Equatorial Guinea—a microcosm of the gulf between the imperialist and semicolonial worlds.

He remarked on discussions about a new book presented at the fair that takes up the 1968–79 reign of terror imposed under the first president, Francisco Macías, under a veneer of anti-imperialist rhetoric. In confronting this legacy, “the new generations of young people are not scarred by fear like previous generations,” Koppel noted. “They respond to the world today, and are determined to overcome the divisions” that were fostered by Spanish colonialism and reinforced under the Macías regime.

Mary-Alice Waters, the president of Pathfinder Press, highlighted the contradictions U.S. imperialism faces as it deepens its economic penetration in Equatorial Guinea, which has quickly become the third-largest oil exporter in Africa. The Pentagon is considering installing a “Forward Operating Site” in the island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea. At the same time a modern working class is beginning to be born. “We saw all of the clashing class forces shaping the world today—close to the surface, not covered up by centuries of obfuscation and distortion we encounter here.”

Waters and other speakers returned to these themes in response to a question about the conditions of Guineans employed in the oil industry. “Many are glad to have the oil investment, seeing it as the only way to begin to overcome underdevelopment,” Waters said. “At the same time they deeply resent the plunder of the wealth of their country by the imperialists.”

The employment of some Guineans in the oil industry and related jobs “raises expectations of working people

Atlanta protesters support Ogoni people’s struggle for autonomy in Nigeria



Militant/Brian Taylor

ATLANTA—“No to Shell!” chanted 60 people in front of the CNN building here November 12. The action drew protesters from seven states. It was part of a conference here sponsored by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). It marked the 10-year anniversary of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others in Nigeria hanged for their role in the Ogoni people’s fight for autonomy, mineral rights, and environmental controls on the imperialist oil barons polluting their land and destroying their crops. A military tribunal-style frame-up trial ironically found the Ogoni militants guilty of the murder of four other activists.

Ogoniland, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, has 500,000 inhabitants. Oil accounts for 80 percent of Nigeria’s export earnings. The delta is the main oil-producing area, dominated by Shell, the Dutch-owned oil company with British and U.S. ties. MOSOP charges Shell with disregarding the impact of its exploration on the Ogoni.

“Ten years ago, on Nov. 10, 1995, the Ogoni lost not only a central leader but so many others killed in the struggle,” Rev. Apollos Bulo, one of the organizers, told the MOSOP conference of some 80 people. Participants, from veteran fighters to young workers and students, vowed to continue their struggle for dignity and control of their land and its resources.

—BRIAN TAYLOR

for better-paying jobs and a larger share of that wealth,” Koppel noted.

The audience contributed \$1,600 to help with the costs of participating in the book fair and the four meetings around the country. Several dozen attended a relaxed brunch the next morning to continue the discussions.

The program was an eye-opener, said Zowadue Mehn, a young worker originally from Liberia. “Even in other countries in Africa people don’t know much about Equatorial Guinea.”

“I learned about the future of Equatorial Guinea,” said José Contreras from Price, Utah. He is part of a group of miners fighting for a union at the Co-Op mine in Utah. The meeting drew

participants from Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Washington, southern California, and Vancouver, Canada.

“I’m hoping to visit a picket line” to learn more about workers’ struggles, said Lindsey Patterson, a journalism student at San Francisco City College. She was interested in Waters’s explanation of why it was important to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the book fair in Equatorial Guinea, as part of the fight to transform the United States and the world.

While publicizing the meeting, organizers of the event met a professor at Laney College in nearby Oakland, who invited Brian Taylor to stay over and speak to her class.

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London, Minnesota, New York

**‘We Start with the World and How To Transform It’
Report from First
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ST. PAUL, MN: meeting Dec. 3,
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Martin Luther King Ctr., 271 Mackubin St.
brunch Dec. 4

NEW YORK CITY: meeting Dec. 10,
6:30 p.m. reception; 7:30 p.m. program
Hunter College, Lecture Hall 714-W
brunch Dec. 11

Speakers at N.Y. and St. Paul meetings: Mary-Alice Waters,
president of Pathfinder Press, and
Arrin Hawkins, Martin Koppel,
and **Brian Taylor,** participants in
First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair

LONDON: meeting Dec. 3,
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Speakers: Jonathan Silberman,
Brian Taylor, participants in First
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Bipartisan commitment to war

“Across the nation, elections signal trend against right-wing politics” is a lead headline in the November 12–18 *People’s Weekly World*, the newspaper of the Communist Party USA. It reflects a common view in the middle-class left and among the liberals such radicals follow. It assumes the Democratic Party is the left wing and the Republicans the right wing.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In its recent unanimous vote for Washington’s gargantuan military appropriations, the Senate loudly endorsed the Bush administration’s course in the Iraq war. Nearly unanimous, the House of Representatives then voted against pulling U.S. forces out of Iraq in the near future.

The bipartisan commitment to using military muscle to safeguard the interests of U.S. finance capital in face of sharpening conflicts with other imperialist powers is firmer than ever. It is fueled both by the opening stages of a world depression and by the most far-reaching shift in Washington’s military policy and organization in decades. The Democratic leadership has no alternative to this ongoing transformation of the military—the hallmark of the Bush administration—or to this course on the Iraq war.

Both parties of America’s ruling families are also equally and jointly committed to an onslaught against the pay and conditions of workers and farmers at home, and attacks on basic rights that working people need to defend themselves from the bosses’ assaults. Congressional agreement on making permanent most aspects of the antidemocratic, anti-worker Patriot Act is ample evidence of the latter. As they did under Clinton, the U.S. rulers today are adding many new crimes to their list of punishable offenses to confront working people in the increasingly violent class battles they anticipate.

Lack of alternatives to this line of action doesn’t minimize polarization in the bourgeoisie. To the contrary. The frustration born from the vulnerability of the profit system combined with the inability to find a course to shield capitalism from sharper crises fuels the factionalism between the rulers’ two main parties.

An editorial in the November 20 *Washington Post* lamented that the Iraq war can’t be fought “amid a partisan free-for-all.” But it is, and it will be, unless Washington rapidly sets back its adversaries in the governments of Syria or Iran, which it is preparing to do to win the war.

The growing loss of self-confidence in the ruling class, reflected in last week’s congressional debates, is not good for working people in and of itself. One of the main contending classes is muddying the ground as it declines. Working people are picking up on their shoes the dirt spread about by the coarsening of politics—the shrill tone, the personal attacks, the sexual innuendo—before getting into the ring to fight the enemy class.

As militant workers oppose imperialist war abroad—calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S., UN, and other imperialist troops from Iraq and elsewhere—and antilabor attacks at home, it is imperative to be clear about this reality and take the high ground. The ground of labor solidarity across borders, as opposed to the dog-eat-dog, “get rich or die trying,” approach of the capitalists. The ground of civil discussion, as opposed to the mudslinging rhetoric and salacious envy of ruling-class politicians and pundits. The ground of political independence from the wealthy rulers and their parties, as opposed to class collaboration—subordinating the interests of labor to those of the exploiters.

Caracas march protests U.S. aggression

Continued from front page

he said, referring to U.S. president George Bush. Regarding the country’s defense, Chávez announced Venezuela would soon receive the first lot of 100,000 Kalashnikov rifles purchased from Russia and patrol boats and planes from Spain. “Defend Venezuela’s sovereignty,” said banners at the march. A sea of red T-shirt contingents was punctuated with thousands of Mexican flags. In addition to backing the government in the dispute with Mexico City and opposing Washington’s confrontationist course, demonstrators expressed support for the administration’s social programs.

“No one forced us to come, no one paid us to come,” said María Mayorga, a young *vencedora* (achiever), a term used here to describe those who had dropped out of school but got a high school diploma through Mission Ribas—one of a number of literacy campaigns across the country.

Elena Lugo, 62, and 16 others who are enrolled in Ribas classes drove from Catia La Mar, a working-class neighborhood in the western outskirts of the city. Being able to complete high school “is marvelous,” said Lugo. “We had never known these kinds of things. This is a revolution in knowledge—a firmer step into the future.”

LETTERS

Below are excerpts of a letter to the editor of the Des Moines Register submitted by Edwin Fruit, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Des Moines City Council in the November 8 elections. As we go to press, the Register has not yet printed the letter.

—Editor

Letter to Des Moines Register

The *Register* editorial of November 3 states, “Edwin Fruit is hard to take seriously...he concedes that he probably wouldn’t do a better job than Kiernan.” I did not concede that at all. In fact I said if elected I would represent the interests of working people, who are the majority in the city, using the office to defend and advance the working class.

In your letters column other readers have pointed to an unserious approach to covering the Socialist Workers Party campaign. In her letter to the *Register* dated October 31, Tarita

Benzoni states, “I take issue with the mocking, disrespectful tone of Jason Clayworth’s interview with Socialist candidate. . .Edwin Fruit. I agree with Fruit that the government should work in the interests of the majority of the people, not corporations.”

We campaigned vigorously on the central issues of the Socialist Workers Party campaign—building strong labor unions and supporting workers’ struggles to use and extend union power to defend themselves and other working people from the bosses’ assaults; opposing imperialist war; and defending women’s right to choose abortion—to name a few. Our campaign spoke out at meetings here in Des Moines protesting racial profiling of Blacks and Latinos by police and opposing the housing ban against those with prior sexual offense convictions. These are serious issues working people face that we insist be addressed.

We look forward to the 2006 elections, where we will continue to campaign to win and, if elected, serve as tribunes of the working class.

Edwin Fruit
Des Moines, Iowa

Renew my subscription

Please renew my subscription for two years. The *Militant* is simply the best working man’s newspaper out there. It is written by and for working people. Please keep up the great work.

Michael Smith
Cincinnati, Ohio

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Lakeside packers

Continued from front page

Tyson bosses, court injunctions limiting the right to picket, harassment by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, goon violence, and company officials determined to defeat the union by maintaining production with scabs and managers. Against these forces, about 1,000 strikers stayed firm on the picket lines, forcing the bosses to concede the closed union shop—the main issue of the strike.

“Membership in the Union shall be a condition of employment for all employees who hold membership in the Union at the date of ratification and for all new employees,” states the new contract.

Over the course of the three-week walkout, approximately 600 production workers crossed the picket line. The company tried to run the plant with them and another 300 clerical personnel and managers. The strikers organized to reach out to the line crossers and had considerable success in convincing dozens to come out and join the union. “Seventeen joined the union in the days before the vote,” reported Kahlid Abdalla. “Once you had a chance to talk to them, you could convince workers from all nationalities to join.”

A feature of the Lakeside workforce is its multinational character. The majority of the workers come from Africa, most of them from Sudan. The second largest group is from Newfoundland.

“We were after the union shop,” said Reuben Mayo, a maintenance electrician who served on Local 401’s bargaining committee. “We proved to the company we can take them on for 23 days with 60 percent of the people,” he said.

According to Local 401 staff organizer Archie Duckworth, about 10 percent of union supporters on the picket line voted against the contract because they didn’t feel it came close enough to a previous proposal from the Alberta Labor Board mediator. The workers had approved that contract proposal and the company had rejected it. “A lot of scabs voted against it too,” Duckworth said.

“The contract was weak,” explained Zacharia Ibrahim who works second shift in processing. “We only got to see it at the time of the vote. But it wasn’t much better than the company’s previous offer.”

Many workers said, however, that forcing the bosses to recognize the union and sign a contract was a major accomplishment. “About 100 people came over to the union because we need the union,” said Chan. “We wouldn’t go back with an empty hand.”

Local 401 members are now continuing the struggle inside the plant. On November 13, about 35 new shop stewards appointed by their local met at the union hall for the first time to discuss the challenges in implementing the contract.

Former coal miner Cindy Montour, who works in processing, was pleased she was chosen as a steward. While waiting for the meeting to start, she told the *Militant* the strike “made everyone stronger. The union was always the priority. Four years from now we will be able to get more of what we need,” she said, referring to the time the current contract expires.

A week after the strike ended, the company remained short-staffed because several hundred people quit during the walkout, said Peter Jany, a shop steward and a leader of the Sudanese workers who helped initiate the union-organizing drive in the spring of 2004. “Some of the scabs have been provocative,” Jany said. “But we are talking to people about the union. And the supervisors aren’t yelling at us like they used to before the strike.”

Natalie Doucet contributed to this article.

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

Miami

March for the Release of Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Sat. Dec. 10, 12:00 p.m. at Torch of Friendship, Biscayne near 4th St. For more information please call (305) 582-4846 or (786) 290-1750.

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